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# The Problem of Reaching and Influencing Farm Women Not in Home Demonstration Clubs

M. C. Wilson, In Charge

Extension Studies and Teaching

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service.....C. W. WARBURTON *Director*
Office of Cooperative Extension Work.....C. B. SMITH *Chief*
Washington, D. C.

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# THE PROBLEM OF REACHING AND INFLUENCING FARM WOMEN NOT IN HOME DEMONSTRATION CLUBS

A Study of 447 Nonmembers of Home Demonstration Clubs in Three State Areas

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## Introduction

In all sections of the country emphasis has been placed upon the formal club as the local unit through which to carry on home demonstration work. Membership in such clubs on the part of farm women is quite generally considered essential to the teaching of better home practices, and extension studies indicate that only a small percentage of women outside of these clubs are influenced by extension to adopt improved home practices. [1] Usually the clubs are quite formal in character, though in a few States informal clubs or groups are organized for certain definite work and disbanded when that work has been completed.

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[1] Wilson, M. C. Effectiveness of home-economics extension work in reaching farm women. U.S.D.A. Ext. Serv. Circ. 101. April, 1929.

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DISTRIBUTION: A copy of this circular has been sent to each State extension director, State and assistant State home demonstration leader, and to each agricultural-college library and experiment-station library.

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In connection with recent studies[2] of home demonstration work in Kentucky, New Jersey, and South Carolina, some information was obtained regarding the possibility of enrolling in home demonstration clubs or otherwise influencing the 447 farm women residing in the areas studied who had never been affiliated with a home demonstration club or group.

In two of the three States, Kentucky and South Carolina, the usual formal type of home demonstration club is the plan followed in the organizations of rural women to carry on extension work. In the third State, New Jersey, formal clubs are not organized, extension work being carried on through informal interest groups which are formed to undertake a specific line of work, and disband when that work had been completed.

## Reasons for Not Joining a Home Demonstration Club

No way to get to club meetings was the outstanding reason given in all three areas for not affiliating with a home demonstration club group, 36 per cent of the women mentioning this reason. Lack of interest in the home demonstration club program kept 20 per cent from joining. That they had no one to care for their small children during their absence from home was reported by 14 per cent of the women. Though 13 per cent stated that they did not have time to attend club meetings, it is quite probable that lack of interest rather than absolute lack of time would be a more satisfactory explanation in the majority of instances.

Poor health on the part of self or other members of the family was the reason given by 10 per cent of the women for not belonging to an extension club. In the case of 6 per cent, it was stated that no club had been organized within reasonable distance. Two per cent, each, reported advanced age, objection to attendance at club meetings on the part of members of the family, and unsatisfactory meeting place as reasons for not having joined a home demonstration club. (Table 1.)

With approximately 60 per cent of nonmembers unable to attend club meetings because of small children, absence of transportation facilities, or poor health, it is important that some other means of teaching be employed to bring to nonmembers information regarding better home practices.

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[2] Wilson, M. C., Rokahr, Mary A., and Weldon, Myrtle M. Effectiveness of extension work with farm home kitchens. Kentucky, 1930. U.S.D.A. Ext. Serv. Circ. 154. April, 1931.
Wilson, M. C., Rokahr, Mary A., and Butters, Marion. Effectiveness of extension work in home management. New Jersey. U.S.D.A. Ext. Serv. Circ. 155.
Wilson, M. C., and Landrum, Lonny I. Effectiveness of home garden extension. South Carolina, 1930. U.S.D.A. Ext. Serv. Circ. 145. Jan. 1931.

Table 1. - Reasons given for not joining a home demonstration club

| Reason | Kentucky area | New Jersey area | South Carolina area | Total, three areas |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of records..... | 170 | 141 | 136 | 447 |
| Per cent giving reason: | | | | |
| No way to get to club meetings.. | 40.6 | 33.3 | 34.6 | 36.5 |
| Not interested in club program.. | 25.9 | 22.7 | 8.1 | 19.5 |
| No one to care for small children..... | 16.5 | 14.2 | 9.6 | 13.6 |
| No time to attend..... | 17.0 | 12.8 | 8.8 | 13.2 |
| Poor health of self or family... | 10.6 | 7.8 | 11.8 | 10.1 |
| No club within reasonable distance..... | 2.9 | - | 15.4 | 5.8 |
| Advanced age..... | 5.3 | - | - | 2.0 |
| Objection by other members of family..... | 2.9 | .7 | 1.5 | 1.8 |
| Meeting place unsatisfactory.... | 1.8 | .7 | 2.2 | 1.6 |
| Did not know about such clubs... | - | 5.0 | - | 1.6 |
| Miscellaneous reasons..... | 8.8 | 19.8 | 7.4 | 11.8 |

## Willingness to Participate in Extension Activities

That one or more home demonstration club meetings had been attended as the guest of a member was reported by 17 per cent of the nonmember women. Thirty-six per cent stated that they had been invited to join an extension club or group, and 27 per cent indicated a willingness to join if invited or reinvited to do so. (Table 2.)

Nearly half, 46 per cent, of the nonmember women said they would attend occasional extension meetings if held on either a countywide or a community basis. That college and United States Department of Agriculture bulletins would be welcomed was the report of 61 per cent of the women. Nineteen per cent expressed a desire to receive circular letters from the county home demonstration agent.

The subject-matter information most frequently desired through bulletins and circular letters dealt with the garden, poultry, and canning, from 14 to 16 per cent mentioning these subjects. Other subjects mentioned by more than 5 per cent of the nonmember women were clothing, foods and nutrition, kitchen improvement, cooking, child care and feeding, house furnishings, and home management.

Asked if they would welcome a personal visit by the county home demonstration agent, 34 per cent of the women replied in the affirmative. The problems listed for discussion at the time of such a visit fall under approximately the same subject-matter headings as bulletin and circular-letter information mentioned above.

Table 2. - Willingness to participate in extension activities

| Item | Kentucky area | New Jersey area | South Carolina area | Total, three areas |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of records..... | 170 | 141 | 136 | 447 |
| Per cent who - | | | | |
| Had ever attended a club meeting..... | 24.1 | 1.4 | 24.3 | 17.0 |
| Had been invited to join a club | 54.7 | 9.9 | 39.7 | 36.0 |
| Would join a club if invited. | 16.5 | 24.8 | 41.2 | 26.6 |
| Would attend an occasional community or county meeting. | 36.5 | 35.5 | 68.4 | 45.9 |
| Would like to receive bulletins..... | 57.6 | 48.9 | 77.2 | 60.8 |
| Would like to receive circular letters..... | 11.8 | 19.1 | 27.9 | 19.0 |
| Would welcome a personal visit from home demonstration agent..... | 22.4 | 29.8 | 52.2 | 33.8 |

## Attitude toward Extension

The attitude toward extension work of the members and former members of home demonstration clubs, when compared to that of the nonmembers, was found to be consistent for all three areas studied. (Table 3.) Fifty-nine per cent of the nonmembers were recorded as favorable in contrast to 95 per cent of the members and former members who were favorable. In the member group 0.3 per cent were recorded as opposed, while in the nonmember group 2.5 per cent were so recorded.

As would naturally be expected, a much higher percentage of the nonmembers were reported as indifferent to extension, 39 per cent, than was true of members and former members, 5 per cent. In attempting to influence the nonmembers to use extension information, the problem is one of overcoming indifference or lack of interest rather than actual antagonism to extension ideas.

Table 3. - Attitude of members and nonmembers compared

| Attitude | Kentucky area | | New Jersey area | | South Carolina area | | Total, three areas | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Members and former members | Nonmembers | Members and former members | Nonmembers | Members and former members | Nonmembers | Members and former members | Nonmembers |
| Number of records. | 110 | 170 | 77 | 141 | 129 | 136 | 316 | 447 |
| Per cent of all farm women..... | 39.3 | 60.7 | 34.5 | 63.2 /3 | 47.6 | 50.2 /3 | 40.8 | 57.8 |
| Per cent reported: | | | | | | | | |
| Favorable..... | 93.6 | 52.4 | 93.5 | 55.3 | 96.1 | 69.8 | 94.6 | 58.6 |
| Indifferent..... | 6.4 | 44.7 | 5.2 | 41.1 | 3.9 | 29.4 | 5.1 | 38.9 |
| Opposed..... | 0.0 | 2.9 | 1.3 | 3.6 | 0.0 | .7 | .3 | 2.5 |

/3 In the New Jersey area there were 5, and in South Carolina 8 nonmember farm women from whom the information analyzed in this circular was not obtained.

## Likelihood of Being Able to Influence Nonmembers

To throw some light on the probability of the nonmember women making use of extension information were they more largely brought into contact with extension work, each interviewer graded the women on this point. These estimates are given in Table 4 -- A representing those women most likely to profit by extension information made available to them, and D those women least likely to make practical use of the information. The writer recognizes that this is a rather crude classification, and yet it would seem to indicate that from 56 to 85 per cent of the nonmember women would probably adopt some of the improved practices recommended could they but be brought into closer contact with extension workers.

Table 4. - Nonmembers grouped according to likelihood of using information if reached

| Grade | Kentucky area | New Jersey area | South Carolina area | Total, three areas |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of records..... | 170 | 141 | 136 | 447 |
| Per cent classed as: | | | | |
| A (most likely)..... | 17.0 | 21.3 | 39.7 | 25.3 |
| B..... | 29.4 | 31.9 | 31.6 | 30.9 |
| C..... | 35.3 | 32.6 | 16.9 | 28.8 |
| D (least likely)..... | 18.2 | 12.8 | 11.8 | 14.5 |

## SUMMARY

This study of 447 nonmembers of home demonstration clubs in representative areas of Kentucky, New Jersey, and South Carolina, indicates that aside from lack of interest in the home demonstration program the principal reasons for not joining extension clubs center around inability to get to meetings owing to lack of transportation, small children, and poor health. Approximately 60 per cent of the nonmember women are unable to attend club meetings regularly for these reasons.

Nearly half of these women stated that they would attend occasional community or county-wide extension meetings if held, and 27 per cent expressed a willingness to join a club if invited.

Bulletins were desired by 61 per cent of the nonmember women; 19 per cent desired circular letters from the extension agent; and 34 per cent would welcome a personal visit to the home by an extension worker.

Only a small fraction of the nonmembers were antagonistic toward extension work. Nearly two out of five, however, were classed as indifferent, or not interested.

In the judgment of those making the interviews, at least 56 per cent of the nonmembers would make use of extension information if it were made available to them. An additional 29 per cent might make some use of it, while 15 per cent would probably be unable to profit from extension teaching.

From the limited data available the occasional meeting, the bulletin, the circular letter, and the home visit are the extension means most likely to reach and influence those who do not affiliate with organized home demonstration club groups.